

# Not so long ago...

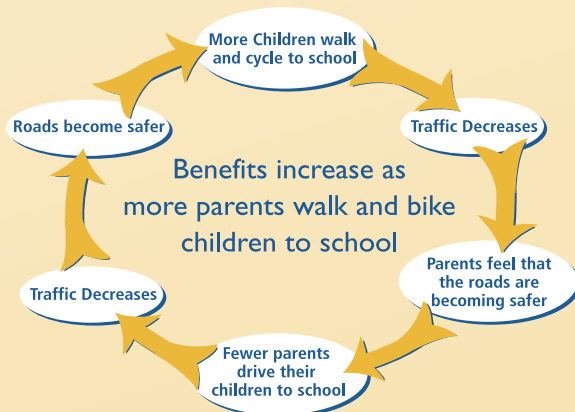
children roamed their neighborhoods on foot or bicycle almost as a rite of passage. Today, moms and dads drive their kids to nearly all activities, fearing for children's safety from both crime and traffic. The once common sight of children walking and cycling has vanished in many communities.

With fewer kids on foot or bike, there are more cars on the road. Parents driving their children to school make up 20-25 percent of the morning commute. The more traffic increases, the more parents decide it is unsafe for their children to walk or bike, adding even more cars to the morning chaos.

## Why do we need safer routes?

- Children are at risk from unsafe streets
- Children are losing their independence
- Children are less active
- Our environment is becoming polluted

You can help break the cycle! A Safe Routes to School movement is getting kids back on their feet and onto their bikes again.



## A few ideas to help you enjoy walking or biking to school

- Always follow the rules of the road. Talk about why traffic safety is important. Wear helmets when riding bikes, and be sure they fit correctly.
- Practice stopping at intersections, looking left, right, front and behind, listening for traffic, and making eye contact with drivers.
- Find all the traffic signs and roadway markings on your route. Talk about what these words and symbols mean.
- Look at people walking, cycling, driving and riding in cars. Talk about ways your child can avoid or minimize dangers along the route, .. what to do at driveways, or near parked cars, etc.
- Look around – get to know your neighborhood – the people, buildings, animals, landscaping, etc. on your route.

**Contact us to learn more** about these ideas to improve your children's routes to school and your neighborhood's walkability.



### California's Safe Routes to Schools Initiative

a program of the California Department of Health Services,  
with additional funding provided by a grant from the California  
Office of Traffic Safety.

toll free: 1-888-393-0353  
web site: [www.dhs.ca.gov/routes2school](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/routes2school)



Walking +  
Biking =  
Healthy, Alert  
Children





# Creating Safer Routes to School

Anyone can take the first step toward safer routes to schools. Here are some suggestions:

- 🏠 Walk or bike to and from school, at least for some of the journey – at least on some days of each week. Encourage neighbors to join you.
- 🏠 Start a "Walking School Bus" or "Bike Train." They are fun, active versions of a carpool.
- 🏠 Encourage your community to hold International Walk to School Day on the first Wednesday in October, or Bike to School Day in May.
- 🏠 Support traffic-calmed streets, crossing guards, enforcement of traffic safety along school routes, and traffic safety education.



## 10 Good Reasons to Walk or Bike to School



### 1. It's Fun!

Walking and biking are fun ways to travel. There's so much to see, smell, touch, think and talk about along the way.

### 2. It's Healthy

Walking and biking are great ways to get fit or to stay strong and healthy. Regular exercise, even 10 minutes at a time, helps your heart, lungs and bones.



### 3. It's Educational

An active start to the day improves mood, concentration, creativity and problem-solving abilities. (That's true for adults, too!) Education doesn't have to start inside the school gate; children can learn about their neighborhood and become more self-reliant.

### 4. It's Non-polluting

Walking and biking trips cause no harmful emissions! Also, walkers and cyclists breathe less pollution than people inside an idling or slow moving car.

### 5. It's Neighborly

Walking enables children and adults to make new friends and get to know their neighbors. Fewer cars outside the school entrance can improve the school's traffic problems, and it is safer for other children who walk.

### 6. It's Less Stressful

Coordinating drop-off and pick-up schedules and driving in commute traffic can be a hassle for both children and adults.

### 7. It's a Chance to Teach and Learn Road Skills

Adults get to teach traffic safety and step out from the driver's perspective to get their children's point of view. Children can practice road safety skills before venturing out on their own.

### 8. It's Convenient

Children who walk or bike can go where ever they need to go, when ever they need to be there – whether it's school, home, the library or ball field.

### 9. It's Economical

Fewer car trips = lower gasoline costs. Each time you walk or bike instead of use a car you save money on gas and maintenance. When more children walk and bike regularly, schools can save money by having fewer buses.

### 10. It's Safer

The presence of walkers and cyclists cues drivers to slow their speeds and use caution. Neighborhoods become a place where everyone can safely play, live and travel throughout the week, not just during school commute times.